

Festive bookings now available at the Mishnish

For the sailors or holidaymakers among our readers, this festive season there are offers available for booking at the Mishnish Hotel in Tobermory at their restaurant An Cala Ciùin during the festive period.

Traditionally popular with guests looking to escape the city over the festive period, The Mishnish Hotel in Tobermory, on Mull – the distinctive yellow (and part of the blue) building in the iconic set of three colourful buildings that sits along the harbour front in Tobermory – has something new and exciting to offer them this Christmas.

There is a new fine dining restaurant within the Hotel, An Cala Ciùin (translated as The Calm Harbour).

Hotel Owners, Meg and Les MacLeod, have created a business partnership with experienced fine dining chef, Ross Caithness, turning an unused upstairs space, which used to house an Italian restaurant, into the stunning twenty cover restaurant.

Ross, who, in his eleven years as a chef, has worked with leading culinary luminaries such as Martin Wishart and Tom Kitchin, is offering two exceptional five and eight course Taster Menus with paired wines at An Cala Ciùin, along with a full a la carte menu which is available at lunchtimes as well as evenings. Both the Hotel, and An Cala Ciùin, are open all

through December.

Menus change regularly with the seasons, and what's available locally, so dishes can change from one day to the other. Ross has also devised a delicious vegetarian menu.

An Cala Ciùin showcases many of Mull's excellent local producers, such as Glengorm, Ross' particular favourite, supplying beef, lamb and venison.

"They've been very supportive in supplying me with the cuts and type of products that I want to use here at An Cala Ciùin," said Ross. "There's always at least a couple of dishes from our tasting menu that incorporate their exceptional produce."

"Smoking their own salmon and trout, Tobermory Fish Co are another great addition, located just up the hill from us."

Such has been the success of An Cala Ciùin in only a few months, a recent Instagram review stated that "the food is world-class ...with every detail on the plate perfect. Ross' sauces are to die for! The best of Scottish produce paired with top tier culinary talent. What a brilliant thing for Mull to have these guys doing what they are doing! Don't miss it!"

"We are delighted about teaming up with Ross, it's provided a new exciting focus in the business which we had been ready to sell," said Meg MacLeod, who is one of only two families that have owned "The Mish" as its locally known, in its 160 year history on Tobermory's world famous sea front.

"We had thought of retiring, and actually went as far as listing the Hotel with an agent. We wanted to find the right kind of owner for this very special business which obviously has meant so much to us since we became its custodians in 2014," she added.

Meg explained that her existing casual dining restaurant

within The Mish, "The MishDish", which is in the downstairs part of the building, already had a very fine reputation for locally caught seafood "which is another reason why tourists come to Mull."

"Teaming up with Ross, with his incredible menus, has given our guests, day visitors, and local customers the choice of two different styles of dining depending on what they are looking for. The MishDish is also very popular, with a wide choice of dishes. We are enjoying showcasing both places in the run up to Christmas," she said

Originally from Dundee, but having worked all over Scotland, and abroad, Ross continues the story: "I had worked on Mull before, spending a season up at Cafe Fish in Tobermory where I was lucky enough to have free reign on working with some of the best seafood straight from the boats," he said.

"I loved the job and I loved the island, but to gain even more experience in fine dining, which I now felt was my niche, I moved to Edinburgh to work at The Kitchin under Tom Kitchin. I'd say this is where I really honed in my skills as a chef, working with the best Scottish produce with classical French techniques. We had a brilliant team there and worked so close with what was best in season. The menus would change weekly, so it was a constant learning environment to be in. I would have to credit Chef Tom for where I am as a chef now!"

From there Ross went on to spend a year and a half working in a restaurant called Mardignon, in a small town called Bassano del Grappa in the North of Italy.

"After returning from Italy, I floated around doing some agency work, trying to figure out what my next permanent move would be. I came back over to Mull to help out Ryan who was the chef at The MishDish, just for a few weeks initially. It was about six years since I had last worked on the island, so it great to come back and see what had changed, and meet up

again with the locals that were still here.”

“I think it took about three days of being here when Meg and Les approached me about the restaurant upstairs which they had a vision of opening again as a fine dining restaurant. It didn't take too much thought on my part to realise that we were all on the same page about what we envisioned for the place.”

In Meg's words, “we realised Ross was absolutely fantastic, just what we had been looking for, and that this was an opportunity not to be missed.”

Ross said: “Our joint vision lined up perfectly on the style of restaurant we wanted to open. I am very grateful as it's not every day as a chef that you get the chance to put everything you've worked for into something you can call your own. We all felt that An Cala Ciùin would be something different to add to the already brilliant array of restaurants on the island.”

In terms of signature dishes at An Cala Ciùin, Ross would list his Langoustine tartar, “a staple from the get go and one of the first dishes on the tasting menu.” Served with shellfish consommé jelly, tomato water, basil oil & caviar, the dish is also one of the most popular with diners.

Another signature is the Glengorm beef cheek, served with potato terrine, autumn chantarelle mushrooms, bonemarrow jus and fresh truffle. “Our palate cleanser which has also been on the menu since day one has another strong local connection – it's a Ledaig whisky sour sorbet (Ledaig being the peat whisky from the Tobermory distillery) which is topped with a burnt sourdough sherbet and confit lemon,” said Ross.

With Christmas fast approaching, Ross, Les, Meg and the whole team at “The Mish” are gearing up for a very busy time. Additionally known for its traditional Mish Bar, which, with its real fire, and many photographs and memorabilia of days

past, oozes atmosphere, visiting the Hotel is an essential part of any trip to Tobermory.

“Along with the regular menus, we will be offering a reduced five course tasting menu throughout December, so that as many people as possible can get the opportunity to try Ross’ cuisine,” said Meg.

An Cala Ciùin is open Wednesday to Saturday, with lunch served 12-2:30pm, and dinner from 5.30-9pm.

www.ancalaciuin.co.uk

www.themishnish.co.uk





